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**For More Information Contact:**  
Dan Bushnell  
DNRC Public Info. Officer  
(406) 444-0465  
[dabushnell@state.mt.us](mailto:dabushnell@state.mt.us)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **DNRC Announces Community Protection Fuels Mitigation Grants Available**

**Missoula, Mont.—** The Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) announced today the opening of the application period for DNRC's Community Protection Fuels Mitigation Grant Program. The purpose of this grant program is to protect communities and subdivisions from fires that cross onto private property from adjacent federal property. By providing assistance to private landowners to reduce their fuel hazard, the threat to communities is reduced.

"This program is designed to work in concert with risk-reduction treatments on national forest lands adjacent to or within the wildland urban interface," said Paula Rosenthal, DNRC's National Fire Plan Coordinator. "Communities should be working with their local Forest Service District offices to find out where the forest is planning fuel treatments (thinning and pruning) work and, where there's private land adjacent to the national forest that needs management, working to reduce the fire hazards on their ownerships ahead of the national forest thinning."

Funding for the program is made possible through the USDA Forest Service as part of the National Fire Plan. Ideal projects are those which treat multiple ownerships and/or contiguous acreage, promoting equal landscape treatment. Past grant recipients include communities, homeowner associations, local governments, and fire departments. Resource Conservation & Development Areas (RC&Ds) can also apply on behalf of individual homeowners, subdivisions, or communities.

Rosenthal also noted that a community or county with a fire plan, such as a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, should be able to readily identify potential projects. "These fire protection plans help communities determine where the greatest threat is within the wildland/urban interface and identify potential projects in advance. When a funding opportunity, like this grant, comes along, you simply have to consult that plan." Information on developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan is available on the DNRC website (<http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire/>).

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According to Rosenthal, there is \$350,000 total available for projects in Montana. Successful applicants must provide 25% of the total project cost as their cost-share match. In keeping with the intent of the program, funding will only be available for actual, on-the-ground treatments of hazardous fuels. Education, planning or other related projects will not be considered. Another grant program, to be announced later this spring, does include funding for other activities, including assisting local government with development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

To download an application or for more information about the program, visit the DNRC website at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire/>. Deadline to apply is May 31, 2005.

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